



SOCIETY FOR
WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

February 24, 2005

The Honorable Michael Castle
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Castle and DeGette:

On behalf of the Society for Women's Health Research, the nation's only not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve the health of all women through research, education and advocacy, we would like to express our strong support for your recently introduced legislation, the "Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act."

The Society for Women's Health Research supports new medical research that holds promise for the treatment of human disease and disability and supports embryonic stem cell research because of the potential that these cells have in curing life threatening diseases. Your bill would build on the existing guidelines at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to oversee the ethical use of embryonic stem cells while expanding the number of lines eligible for federal funding.

The therapeutic potential of embryonic stem cells is remarkable because these cells have the unique potential to differentiate into any human cell type. Embryonic stem cells offer real hope of life-affirming treatments for diabetes, damaged heart tissue, arthritis, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, ALS and spinal cord injuries, to name but a few examples. There is also the possibility that these cells could be used to create more complex, vital organs, such as kidneys, livers, or even hearts.

As you know, women live longer but not necessarily healthier lives than men. Many of the illnesses for which embryonic stem cell research shows such promise have a particularly strong impact on women. For example, cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of American women. Other afflictions that might be cured or alleviated through this research, such as Alzheimer's disease and stroke, affect women in disproportionately high numbers.

We thank you for introducing the "Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act" and for your leadership in protecting research and improving the health of the women and men of our nation.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Greenberger
President and CEO

Martha Nolan
Vice President of Public Policy